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No Saudi crisis looms, CIA chief predicts

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Washington—The director of central intelligence said yesterday that Saudi Arabia is "subject to some of the same pressures" that produced the revolution in Iran, but does not face an early crisis.

On balance, the situation in Saudi Arabia is "not as it was in Iran last year," said Adm. Stansfield Turner, head of the Central Intelligence Agency. He did not attempt a long-range forecast at a luncheon meeting with reporters.

Stability in Saudi Arabia is important to two important aspects of American foreign policy. It is a critical supplier of oil to the industrialized democracies—including 20 per cent of U.S. imports—and its ultimate judgment on the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty may determine whether the treaty works.

Admiral Turner, who retired from the Navy at the beginning of this year, cited important differences between the social structures of Saudi Arabia and pre-revolutionary Iran. For one thing, he said, Saudi Arabia is governed by consensus of the royal family, and thus has a broader base than the autocracy of the deposed shah of Iran.

Moreover, he added, Saudi Arabia is "less Westernized, less industrialized" and has not "strayed as far from Islamic tenets" as the revolutionaries perceived Iran had. These are all widely accepted as considerations in the overthrow of the shah.

On the other hand, Admiral Turner cited the great number of expatriate workers in Saudi Arabia, including stateless Palestinians, as a potential source of instability.

Ranging widely over foreign policy issues, he confirmed the widespread assumption that the loss of U.S. electronic intelligence stations in Iran has reduced capability for monitoring Soviet compliance with a prospective arms control treaty. The U.S. has other means of detection, he said, but he refused to make a judgment on their adequacy.

His role in verification of the strategic arms limitation (SALT) treaty, he explained, will be to report "my level of confidence that X is true." Whether that is adequate for verification, he said, will be a decision for policy-makers.

Verification—the ability to determine Soviet compliance—is expected to be a critical issue in the Senate debate over treaty ratification. Apart from the merits of the treaty, critics argue that the Soviet Union may be able to cheat without being detected.

Admiral Turner argued, moreover, that Senate discussion of verification must be kept secret during the debate. Otherwise, he said, the ability to monitor "will unravel like a ball of string. And if we keep revealing, I can guarantee you we'll not be able to verify."

On the other hand, secrecy about verification capability could be a powerful tool for treaty opponents in the struggle for public opinion. Admiral Turner made the appeal for discretion as he reported the workload created for the CIA by requests under the Freedom of Information Act.

Already, he said, requests for information under the act—including some from



ADM. STANSFIELD TURNER
Compares Saudi Arabia, Iran

the Polish Embassy—have required "116 man-years of processing." Each request, such as one for all film relating to Vietnam acquired since 1940, must be researched, he said, even when it is likely the material will be withheld.

The intelligence director said he hopes Congress will produce a new charter for the agency and other intelligence organizations this year. Among other things the new mandate presumably would define responsibilities and clarify ground rules regarding secret information.

Admiral Turner treated the events that led to the fall of the shah of Iran, an American client, as more a failure of analysis than of information collection. The discontent was known, he said, but there was no thought that it would coalesce behind the Islamic fundamentalism of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

The shah also "did not perceive how serious the situation had become," he said, and thus did not move quickly enough to establish control.

CIA 4 SAUDI Arabia
L IRAN
CIA 4 PALESTINE

ORG 1 SALT

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